

The Midland

VOLUME TWO

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1916

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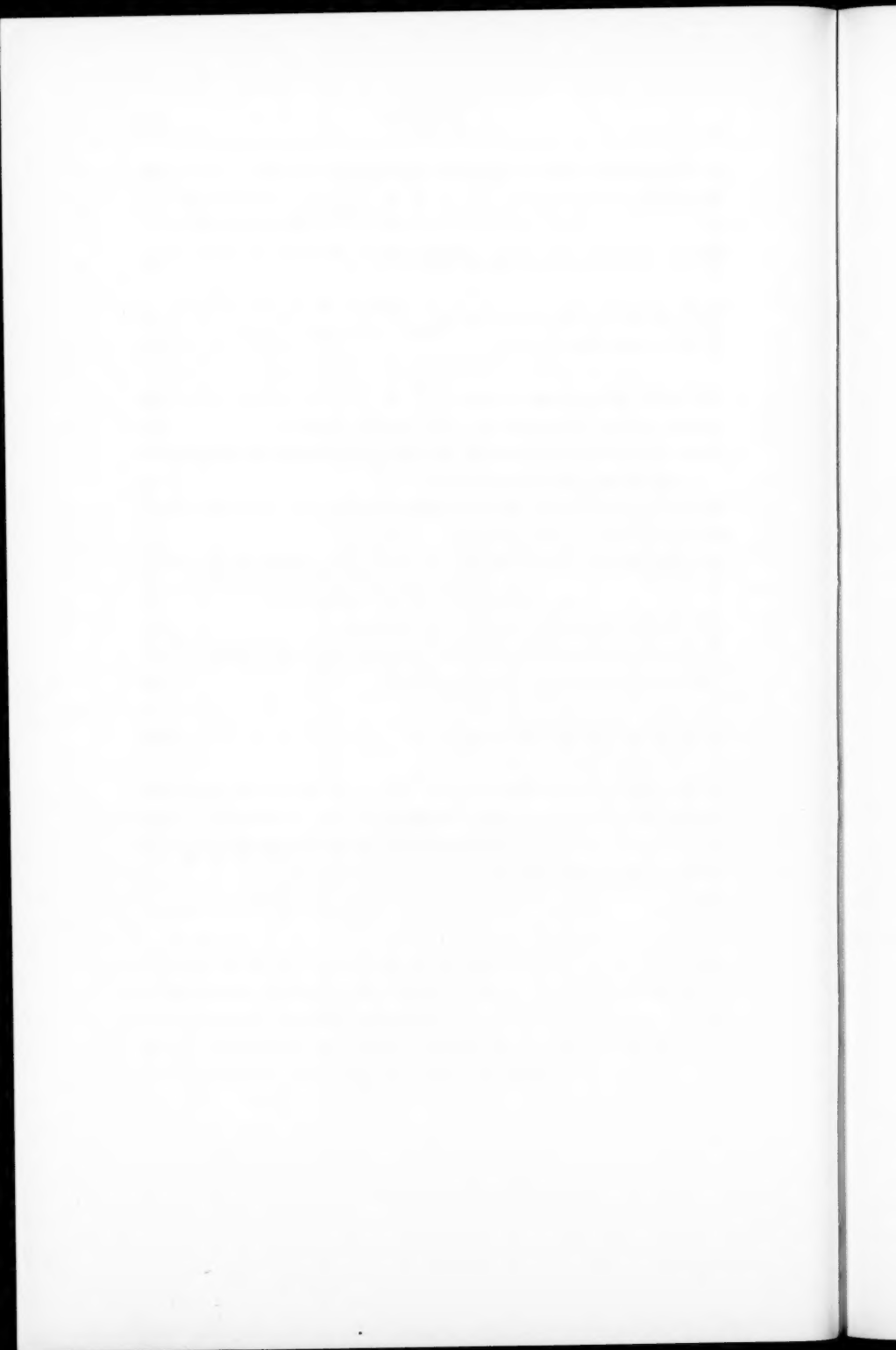
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The Midland

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VOLUME II

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NUMBER 1

The Spirit of the Middle West

At the San Francisco exposition, Iowa won praise by its huge cornucopia of corn. In many things, Iowa is typical of the Middle West; and Iowa's symbol is not inappropriate to the whole great region, a region peculiarly favored by nature with countless square miles of most fertile soil. This is the corn belt. For Indian corn, kingship is claimed. Where corn thrives, hogs thrive, and farmers enjoy stable prosperity.

Compared with his brothers in other regions, the farmer of the Middle West is excellently fed, clothed and sheltered. Relatively at least, he does not know material wants; he knows material comforts and pleasures. What to many others are visions of luxury are to him necessary things. His gasoline engines, his automobiles are not luxuries; they are among his investments.

Until very recently, the Middle West was all wilderness, and much of it was Great American Desert. It is no longer desert or wilderness. It has attained a prosperity that tempts to repose, to complacency,

—to rest, comfort and the enjoyment of material possessions. These things characteristically satisfy the bourgeois, the middle class, the world over. Men and women who are satisfied in this way are thereby bourgeois or middle class; they have fulfilled the requirement that is the basis of the classification.

Probably the Middle West has come as near the abolishing of poverty as any region has ever come. It has some delinquents, some defectives, inevitably; but it has no lower class comparable to the lower classes in other parts of the world. It seems in no immediate peril of developing a lower class. Does it give any promise of developing men and women who are above middle class? If so, how many shall attain an upper class, what shall be the nature of their achievement, and what height shall the highest reach? If such questions are not tolerated, are not welcomed and answered, the words of a critic become permanently just: the Middle West remains "a high level, but a dead level." As it knows not want, it knows not distinction. It feeds and clothes itself, it helps to feed and clothe the rest of the world; but for human, not animal, gifts, no one seeks it; its best, its exceptionally endowed with human needs and abilities must in exile seek tolerance of their life and work.

Such a conclusion would utterly condemn both the Middle West and democracy; for the Middle West is democracy incarnate. In spite of frequent misrepresentation by the bourgeois or philistine exception,

the Middle West is not at the end of its progress, is not without ideals, and is far from any intent that its chief distinctions shall be material. This discontent in the midst of plenty, this aspiration, keeps the Middle West even now from being a "dead level." "Where there is no vision, the people perish;" but the Middle West is not without vision, is not animal, and is not and never has been middle class because it has never been content.

Democracy is not yet an achievement. It is an experiment, an aspiration. If it succeeds, the masses will be better than masses ever were before; they will be not animal, content with physical comfort and pleasure, but they will be human, with needs and pleasures of the mind and spirit. Democracy requires for its justification that the high level shall steadily become higher and that the services to civilization made by its best shall not be inferior to the prized gifts of the best men of undemocratic environments. So far is the Middle West from complacency that it aspires to be the home of greater Platos, Shakespeares and Beethovens; for no less an achievement can justify its democracy. It is not without vision to keep it alive, to keep it from putrefaction.

The end is remote enough to assure life, humanity, in the Middle West for a long time. Plato, Shakespeare and Beethoven are not easily equalled in or out of a democracy. The Middle West is at the first uncertain but joyous steps of its long way. It must

make its landscape of country and town say unmistakably to every beholder that those who live here live in the earthly paradise. This is a task; but the Middle West has undertaken it, has begun the centuries of its work. The homes of town and country must have solidity and permanence, and the design of them must speak the cheering truth. In these homes and in worthy public buildings must be worthy painting, sculpture and music. Good literature must be the reading of the people, and among them must be from generation to generation makers of good literature.

The prosperity of the Middle West is very stable and gives all promise of abiding; but no symbol of this prosperity can be accepted as expressing the limit of the aspiration of the people. The Middle West has entered upon the toils and joys of the way of civilization, the way that has no end.

To the Spirit of Song

By MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

Thou silver-lipped, thou lyrist of All Time,
Poet who knowest no change, prophet unawed
Of Eld's illimitable lure, bright sign of God,
Thou holdest the World close prisoner in a chime!
Weaving for each thy pleasing gyves of rhyme,
The souls of men thou shacklest; 'neath the sun
No speech is numbered but thy power hath won;
Thine empery extends to every clime.
Thou broodest above all battlefields, thine ear
Attuned to hear the hero's soul outrolled;
Thou shapest the mortal in immortal mold;
Interpreter art thou who makest clear
The hieroglyph of Time, the rose of June.
The harp which Homer woke thou keepest in tune.

"But the Earth Abideth Forever"

By EDWARD G. QUIGLEY

"Let me keep her till spring, till your mother comes," Mrs. Knudson begged when Sivert Olson came to take his baby home.

"No, you are not strong, and you have so many of your own to care for." The young Norwegian glanced toward the three yellow-haired children who had scrambled up from their play on the floor to stare at him and the chubby boy at his side. Then looking about the little shanty with its walls of rough pine boards, its two beds and its cook-stove, he added, "You haven't room for any more."

Mrs. Knudson stooped over the home-made cradle. It held two babies, her own and Sivert Olson's.

"Why Sivert, you—you can't—you don't know how to take care of such a young baby. She may die if you take her."

"I took care of Olaf when he was little like that." The young father patted his sturdy four-year-old son on the head. "Christina wasn't well then, and I took all the care of him. See how strong he is."

The little boy in big felt boots and mackinaw jacket drew closer to the man and looked bashfully at the other children.

"But it—it doesn't seem right," said Mrs. Knudson, "and I, I would give her baby the same care that I do my own, and—"

"It isn't that, I know you would do that."

"How can you go anywhere? You can't leave Olaf and the baby alone."

"No. I thought of that too," he said. "I'll bring them here for you to keep when I need to go to town. You will let me do that."

Mrs. Knudson had taken the smaller babe in her arms, and now she nestled its face against her cheek, its little white head close to her smooth brown hair. As she began to wrap a gray blanket about it, little Elsa with yellow hair in two long braids, stole nearer and pulled her mother's blue calico gown, whispering:

"Mother, will the big man take the little new baby away?"

"Yes, Elsa."

"Will its mother come back now?"

"No, no, Elsa, no!"

The young man shifted uneasily and turned toward the window. He put on his heavy, dark colored cap and pulled it down over his forehead. Then he pushed his hands into the pockets of his coarse overcoat and seemed to be looking out across the wind-swept prairie where the first snow was beginning to fly. Tears stood in his clear gray eyes, the clean lips under his blond mustache closed tight and he swallowed the pain that gripped his throat. Christina used to take Olaf in her arms and wrap him up like that when he was a baby. Christina had never been able to hold their little girl.

"You and—and Christina didn't name her anything yet. You will name her—what will you name her?" asked Mrs. Knudson when she handed him the bundle.

"Christina," he said.

Then he went out with his children, and Mrs. Knudson stood at the window to watch them drive away in the big farm wagon that was soon lost behind the veil of falling snow.

Late that night, in his own shanty of new pine boards, Sivert Olson sat by his little coal-oil lamp writing to his old mother in Norway. He told her of Christina's death. He asked her to make haste in her preparations so she could come over early in the spring. He said he would send her the money in a few weeks.

After the letter was sealed, he rested his elbows on the table, his chin between his hands, his huge shadow filling the space behind him, where stood the cradle and the bed. The fire in the cook-stove burned out, the board walls snapped and creaked in the cold, and white frost covered all but one black corner of the window panes. Still he had not moved. When the hands of the little Norwegian clock, ticking on the shelf behind the stove-pipe, pointed past midnight, a faint sound from the cradle roused him. He started and turned half way around, letting the light fall upon the bed where Olaf's curls showed from the dark covers, and along the walls where clothes were

hanging—a boy's little jacket, some baby dresses, a man's overalls and flannel shirts, and a woman's calico gowns.

The baby's fretting broke into a plaintive cry. The man jumped to his feet, lifted her from the cradle—a small bundle in his big rough hands—and put her in the warm bed where Olaf cuddled close to her and murmured in his dream. At last the father blew out the light and lay down with his children.

Tick, tick, tick, went the little clock: the wind moaned around the lonely shanty, rattling the window-panes and shaking at the door.

The longest nights of winter had come, the longest and coldest. Sivert Olson was up before daylight one morning preparing to drive to Blue Mound, ten miles away. He wanted to buy groceries and "something to make Christmas for the little ones." He would leave his children with Mrs. Knudson until he came back. So he wrapped them in blankets, covered them with hay in the back of the sled and jingled away over the snow.

As the keen air cut the horses' lungs, they plunged and shook their heads and their breath rolled from their nostrils in little clouds, white in the pale gray dawn that followed the fading stars. The young Norseman stood up in the front of the sled with the lines around his waist, swinging his arms, beating his mittened hands against his sides. His heavy cap and the high collar of his brown coat almost covered

his face, yet ice glistened in his mustache, and he as well as the horses found that sharp air hard to breathe.

In the southeast the gray soon tinged with a greenish yellow, and from three brightening spots some distance apart along the horizon, brassy gleams danced toward the zenith. Then, not one, but what seemed to be three suns came into sight; the white plains widened and stretched away until they touched all the rim of the great dome of dull sky, blanching in the weird light from that ill-boding trio.

Sivert Olson left his children at Knudson's and sped away across the glistening fields of snow, while the sun mounted toward the south, still followed by its uncanny attendants. Their dull light shone until mid-day. But a little later the sundogs vanished. The sun itself paled like the ghost of a moon, and the sky grew dark as if a polar twilight had drifted down from the north. The wind rose. It began to whip the snow into whirling bits of ice. From all sides the grayness came creeping toward the lone driver, now starting back from the bleak little town. Soon there was no more space; he moved in a cloud of stinging snow through which he could not see the heads of his team.

When he stopped for his children, Mr. Knudson came out with a lantern.

"Sivert, I think you had better stay all night with us. It's going to come what they call a *blizzard* in this country. You might get lost."

"Do you think I could get lost driving only three miles more?"

"Men have been lost in these storms," Knudson shook his bushy red head. "The winter before you came over, a man out north of Blue Mound was lost and froze to death between his own house and barn."

Sivert Olson hesitated; then he said:

"There is not room for so many here. Besides, I ought to be home to feed and milk my cow. It's not quite dark yet, you see."

They carried the children out to the sled, where they tucked the horse-blankets over them to keep the snow from beating into their nest of hay. As the tired horses lunged through drifts belly-deep, their master tried to guide them; but soon he could not see their backs. He knelt in the front part of the sled and let them take their own course. At length he felt tired, drowsy. Into his heart and brain the chill was penetrating. It had been a long time since they left Knudson's; hours, he thought.

To lie down in the snow and hay, to rest a minute, only a minute, seemed an easy thing to do; but he jumped up and pulled on the lines, calling "Whoa! whoa!"

When the team halted, he crept back to the children, pawed away the snow until he found the blanket, and with his mouth close to the bundle, he shouted:

"Olaf! Olaf! are you awake?"

He felt the blanket moving under his hand. "Lie still! lie still!" he called, and let the horses go on, while he swung his arms with all his might and kicked against the sled-box with his felt boots.

Then he had to rest; the drowsiness came stealing over him again. Where were they? How much farther could it be? It was only three miles. What could it mean?

Suddenly the horses stopped. Olson roused himself and urged them forward. But when they started, they tried to turn aside; their neck-yoke seemed to catch in something, and they stopped again. He jumped out into the snow and floundered to their heads, where he tried to pass in front of them, but he ran against a snow-covered thing, large and solid, a thing he examined carefully, eagerly, until he felt hay under the snow and wood under the hay. It was his own barn, a shack of poles covered with prairie grass. When he found the door and opened it, a low "M-m-m-m" greeted him, and he heard his cow getting up from her bed of straw.

Stepping into that still darkness, he groped across to the cow's stall, and, pulling off his mittens, he leaned against her warm flank. She licked his clothes, her rough tongue grating on the sleeve of his coat. But in another minute he was out in the blizzard unhitching his horses. Then with the children in his arms, the snow beating against his face, and the wind taking his breath, he struggled toward the house. He staggered at times and almost fell. At

last, in stooping forward to lay Olaf down for a minute, while he might think and get his breath, he brushed against a board wall. This told him that he had gone beyond the door. He felt along the side of the house until he stumbled on the step. When he had found his way inside, he laid the children on the bed.

In a little while he had a fire crackling in the cook-stove, and the blankets from the cradle shaken out and hanging over a chair by the open oven. As soon as the room began to feel warm, he unwrapped the baby and sat near the stove holding her in the bend of his big arm, while he stroked her soft white hair and she blinked at the lamp-light.

"Olaf, Christina's out first!" he called.

The boy lay on the bed, swathed in his blankets. Now he began to kick and squirm until he rolled off on the floor, as awkward as a little bear, in his thick clothes and big felt boots. His father laughed, but Olaf scrambled quickly to his feet and, thrusting his hand into the pocket of his pudgy jacket, pulled out a top made from an empty spool.

"See!" he cried. "Knute, he gave me this. He makes 'um with his knife. It goes 'round; it goes 'round like this."

He plumped himself down on the floor and tried to make it spin, but his fat little thumb could not give it the right twist. So his father leaned over with Christina on one arm, and made it go "'round" for him.

A little later Sivert Olson put his baby in her cradle.

"Won't grandmother be surprised to see such a big fat girl!" he said, stooping over to kiss her.

Christina laughed and clutched at his mustache. He turned away from her to put on his coat and cap. Then he lighted a lantern, took a tin pail from the cupboard and said:

"Olaf, watch little sister while I'm gone, and I'll give you a drink of warm milk when I come back."

"Hee, warm milk, warm milk!" shouted Olaf, dancing about the cradle.

As the man opened the door, a gust of wind and snow swept in and almost blew out the light. Then the children were alone.

Christina cooed; Olaf played on the floor with his potato horses and corn-cob hogs; the fire roared; the tea-kettle hummed; and the little clock ticked away for an hour. At length the baby began to fret, and Olaf rocked the cradle, half singing as he swayed to and fro:

"Father's coming, father's coming with warm milk."

But Christina raised her voice to a cry. Her bottle, partly filled with milk Mrs. Knudson had put in it, lay near her feet. Olaf grabbed it up and poked it at her mouth. It was cold. She pushed it away and screamed louder than before. Then he rocked the cradle until she rolled from side to side.

"Father! Father!" he kept shouting. The wild cries of the wind drowned his call.

When Christina finally stopped crying and began to catch her breath in fitful sobs, the fire was gone and Olaf shivered with cold. It was then the little boy went to the frost-covered latch and pulled it until the door creaked and swung open.

"Fa—", he began, but drew back and raised his hands to brush away the snow that tumbled on his head, a frightened look in his little round face.

Before him a white bank, high as a man's shoulder and bearing on its surface an impression of the outside of the door, glittered in the lamp-light. He pushed the door to close it, but the snow that had fallen in would not let it latch. He dragged a chair against it; still the crack was wide and he felt the cold pouring in upon him. Running to the bed, he turned the covers back just as he had seen his father do. Then he pulled the sobbing baby from her cradle, lugged her across the room, trailing one of the blankets along with her, tumbled her upon the bed, crawled in after her and jerked the covers over their heads.

No more steam came from the tea-kettle now. Check, clink, went the stove as it cooled. On every nail-head in the wall sparkled stars of frost, and steadily through the crack in the door drifted the snow.

Another hour, and the stove was still; spicules of ice shot across the surface of the water in the wooden pail on the table, thick frost gathered in the mouth of the tea-kettle. The lamp burned lower and

lower, flickered at last, and its uncertain flame sank in a dull red glow, and the glow dimmed into a black, smoking wick which filled the room with a sickening smell. The little Norwegian clock stopped ticking. The only sound came from the wind.

Silently, silently, in the pail on the table, the ice thickened until no more water was free. Then it bulged and cracked with a sudden snap.

The noise roused little Olaf.

"Father!" he called once more, and pushed his covers aside.

The biting air rushed into his warm nest; he quickly drew the blankets over his head and pressed closer against the baby.

Two days after the storm, Rudolph Gunderson was breaking the road to Blue Mound. Sometimes he could drive along for a quarter of a mile. Then he would have to stop and shovel through banks as high as his head, his patient horses following close behind him dragging the sled step by step. As he worked his way past Sivert Olson's place, he noticed that a smooth drift of snow lay close to the eaves of the house, and that no smoke came from the stove-pipe. He hurried on to Knudson's and told what he had seen.

An hour later, three men came back along the newly broken path,—three men in short jackets and thick felt boots, with shovels over their shoulders. They began to dig in the drift that lay between the

road and the little roof from which came no sign of life, and as they dug, the blue steel of their shovel blades flashed in the sun.

When the months of snow had passed and the prairies were green again, plovers calling plaintively to their mates ran up and down in the furrows where Sivert Olson had ploughed, and gophers bobbed in and out of their holes in the door-yard where little Olaf had played. As the summer wore away, the sun-flowers and tumble-weeds grew thick about the shanty. The stove-pipe in the roof leaned far to one side; hail had beaten the glass from the windows. Men seldom passed that way.

But one day in early fall, a steam-thresher went puffing by, and sparks flying from its trail of black smoke kindled the thatch of the barn. A quick blaze leaped up in the yellow sunshine, and the pile of old hay and poles tumbled into a heap of smoking ashes. At the same time, the little red tongues of fire were licking through the dry weeds. The wind fanned them on toward the house, and soon they darted higher and higher against the dry pine boards. Red banners waved and flaunted in the face of the low sun. The roof gave in, the walls fell, and the fire sank down, leaving, in the calm that came with the close of the day, a thin column of bluish smoke rising toward the rose-tinted heaven, a mound of smouldering embers to be fanned into red gleamings by fitful breezes of a September night, a bed of ashes to be scattered by the winds.

Twelfth Night at Fisher's Crossing

By JOHN T. FREDERICK

Characters

SARAH OLSON, *a child*

WILL OLSON, *her father, an Iowa farmer*

ANNA OLSON, *his wife*

FRANK CONOWAY, *station agent at Fisher's Crossing*

LIEBMANN, *a Jewish peddler*

GEORGE, *a Greek laborer*

Prologue

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him. . . . And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Scene

The waiting room of the depot at Fisher's Crossing, Iowa. Bare walls, except for a tattered map of the United States, and a yellow poster announcing the last State Fair. Seats along three walls. In the middle of the room a rusty "cannon" stove, with its door open and the fire shining brightly. This is the

only light in the room. The rear of the stage is a partition dividing the waiting room from the office, from which is heard intermittently the click of a telegraph instrument. The ticket window is closed, but the light of a lamp shines through it. The door to the office stands ajar. At one side near the front of the stage is a door opening to the depot platform.

Discover LIEBMANN sitting in one corner, apparently asleep. Grips and satchels are piled on both sides of him upon the seats.

Enter MRS. OLSON, wrapped in shawls and with a red "fascinator" wound about her head.

MRS. O.—*(breathlessly)*.—Has the train come yet?
CONOWAY.—*(from within office)*.—Thirty minutes late.

MRS. O. *gasps in relief, and turning to the fire begins to loosen her wraps. To LIEBMANN.*—Good evening, Mr. Liebmann.

LIEBMANN.—Good evening. Which train did you look for, the east or the west?

MRS. O.—Oh, I came to meet the west-bound—the one from Dubuque.

LIEBMANN.—Oh. Well, I was waiting for the east bound.

MRS. O.—*(Has caught the "fascinator" on a button on the back of her coat, and has difficulty in unfastening it)*.—Would you mind unfastening that for me?

CONOWAY.—*(Comes hastily out of office)*.—Here, I'll do it for you, Mrs. Olson. . . . Come down to meet your husband?

MRS. O.—Yes, him and Sarah. He went to Dubuque after her this morning—took the four o'clock.

CONOWAY.—Yes, he told me he was going. Saw him before it came this morning. Said today was her birthday and the doctor had written to come for her.

MRS. O.—Yes, and he didn't say anything about her eyes. 'Pears to me he ought to have told us how she was.

CONOWAY.—Oh, you don't know how she is, then?

MRS. O.—No. It seemed to me I couldn't wait all day. But I did. And then I hustled through the feeding and milking so as to try and get down here in time to meet the train. It'll be here pretty soon, won't it?

CONOWAY.—(*Glancing at his watch*).—About fifteen minutes. I'll see if they're out of Granger. (*Enters office; click of instrument is heard*).

MRS. O. *sits in front of fire*.

LIEBMANN.—Your little girl has not good eyes?

MRS. O.—No, she got burned with scalding lard, playin' around at butcherin' time, two years ago last fall, and it about put her eyes out.

LIEBMANN.—(*attentive*).—Oh.

MRS. O.—Doc Hamill said there was some chance of them being saved if she was tended to right away.

LIEBMANN.—And you tried, and it didn't do any good?

MRS. O.—Well, we're trying now. You see, we had two bad years, and then my Aunt Eliza was sick

so long.—And I took care of Sarah like she was a baby, and she ain't never seemed to get older. And—

LIEBMANN.—(*quickly*).—I see.

CONOWAY.—(*reënters*).—They're out of Granger—be here most any time now, Mrs. Olson.

MRS. O.—I'm glad o' that.

CONOWAY.—Yes, I'll bet you are. Sarah was away at Christmas, wasn't she?

MRS. O.—Yes, and mighty lonesome we was without her. We fixed a box and sent her, but it wasn't like having her at home to hang up her stockin'.

CONOWAY.—Yes, I'll bet! I've been away from home for eighteen months myself—been away two Christmases. But my folks always send me a box. I'll show you what—(*he goes into inner office, and returns directly with a paste-board box. Lifting the lid, he lets MRS. O. look in. She lifts out a red knitted scarf and tam-o-shanter*). Yes, my mother made 'em both—knitted 'em herself. Mighty fine and warm for this time of year.

MRS. O.—Well, ain't them fine! (*She holds them up for LIEBMANN to see, while CONOWAY beams*). I'll have to get to work an' make Sarah some to match the mittens her Aunt Maggie sent her for Christmas, I guess. Do you sell yarn? (*turning to LIEBMANN*).

LIEBMANN.—No—I have no yarn. But maybe your little girl would like some of these. (*He opens a*

grip and begins to display colored shoes). They are the best leather, and—
(*Their voices trail into undertones, MRS. O. looking eagerly at the shoes.*)

GEORGE *enters quietly, passing slowly behind stove.*

CONOWAY.—Hello, George.

GEORGE *nods.*

CONOWAY.—(*indicating MRS. O., speaks hesitatingly, feeling for words*).—Pettinene dhea to micro coretsaki tis.

GEORGE.—Oh!

CONOWAY.—Yes—to micro coretsaki ene tifo.

GEORGE.—Oh—eni tifo?

CONOWAY.—Ene tifo—trying to be cured—healed—see?

GEORGE.—(*nods*).—Oh. (*He looks sympathetically at MRS. O.*)

MRS. O.—(*To LIEBMANN*).—I'm sorry, but I just can't afford to get them now. The hospital bills is so big, you know. I know she'd like these red ones—(*fingering pair of red shoes*)—but—

LIEBMANN.—(*Begins to pack things up*).—You say your little girl's name is Sarah?

MRS. O.—Yes.

LIEBMANN.—I had a girl Sarah once.

CONOWAY.—I suppose you'll be glad if she can see all right again,—mighty glad, won't you, Mrs. Olson?

MRS. O.—Oh yes, of course.—(*Pauses*).—Of course, she's my only baby now, since the boy—and she'd soon grow up—

LIEBMANN.—(*decidedly*).—Yes, I know. I wished my Sarah wouldn't grow up. But she did—and then—well, you know how—

CONOWAY.—There she whistles now for the crossing! I've got to get the orders! (*He drops his box on a seat, darts into office, returns with a slip of yellow paper, and rushes out*).

MRS. O. *excitedly gets her shawl and "fascinator" around her. The door is pushed open, and MR. OLSON and SARAH enter, followed shortly by CONOWAY. SARAH's eyes are bandaged. MR. O.'s face is tense, and he staggers as he tries to shut the door. CONOWAY crosses toward office, stopping behind stove.*

MRS. O.—Oh, my dear baby! (*Clasps SARAH tightly. As she notes her husband's face, she rises slowly, releasing the child, who turns toward the stove. He looks away agonizedly*).

MR. O.—It's too late.

MRS. O.—Why Will—what's the matter? Ain't she —?—(*Looks toward SARAH*).

MR. O.—No. It's my fault.—Come, we must get for home.—I ought to have sent her sooner.

MRS. O.—Why Will, we done it just the soonest we could.

MR. O.—If I'd a known—they said a year ago—

MRS. O.—Why Will, we'd a done it if we could. If the hogs hadn't a had the cholera, and then Aunt Eliza's being sick so long,—(*He looks into her eyes gratefully, steps near to her, awkwardly*

lays his hand on her shoulder, then tries to straighten her shawl. While this is going on—)

CONOWAY.—(In undertone, to GEORGE).—Eni tifo akome!

GEORGE.—Yah!

LIEBMANN tremblingly opens his grip, places red shoes in SARAH'S hands, shuts grip, and goes out into the darkness. CONOWAY puts red tam-o-shanter on her head and scarf about her neck, hurries into office, and slams door. GEORGE slips a silver quarter-dollar into one of the shoes, and follows LIEBMANN out.

MR. O.—I'm sorry, Anna.

MRS. O.—Don't worry no more now, Will. She's still our baby, Will. (They turn to the child, who stands smiling).

"The Song of Hugh Glass"*

By ROGER L. SERGEL

There has been a true song sung lately: it is "The Song of Hugh Glass," and the singer is John G. Neihardt. It is a poem which recreates for us of America, especially for us of the Middle West and the Northwest, those lives that went before our civilization as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. For the most part we are comfortable in this civilization now, and when we begin to look about us for values unrelated to prosperity we are too apt to be led to alien inspirations. Not so with Neihardt: he has found "stark saga stuff" in our own history; and he has not conceived that history as entirely enacted on the Atlantic Coast, but has gone to the annals of the American Fur Trade and has there found abundance for what he hints may be a cycle. If the other songs approach the standard of this, let us fervently pray that these songs take rank with, if not precedence over, Scott and Tennyson in our schools, for whatever harm might come to the songs from callow interpretation would be more than compensated by the sturdy values accruing to the succeeding generations of school-children. And such interpretation can do small harm to such magnificently virile things as "The Song of Hugh Glass."

*By John G. Neihardt. The Macmillan Co. N. Y. \$1.25.

Virile is an inadequate word; nothing can define the nature of this book but a reading of it—and that is an experience worth living indeed,—it is to have caught up for you into a work that is to belong to world literature, the places you have seen, where you may have lived or where your friends may live; the deeds of brave men which are your heritage and which are more integral to your past than ever the events of the *Æneid* were to the Romans or those of the *Arthuriad* to the Britons. Under the same skies you daily gaze upon, these tragic jestings of chance were laughed; under these skies, naked deeds of utter courage were dramatized upon the vast and sombre stage which nature had set for them; and on the plains across which long trains rush daily now, the wounded Hugh Glass once *crawled* a hundred miles. Under the succession of flaming day and gray day, of brooding night and tempestuous night, these early heroes traced this epic scrawl in terrible and indelible characters. We of this weaker time must be more than thankful for a poet who sings for us this grim glory of departed days.

He has sung more than men; he has sung for us the very essence of our inescapable background of nature. He has shown the grim, gigantic heedlessness of it; its implacable might and its far-spreading sere and sinewy immensity, above which rises the day, a spacial thing, a splendid thing, a cathedral reared and ruined with the hours; and he has given us truer sense of our own rivers, Titan in their mas-

tery, unsurpassed in naked athletic beauty. All this we feel, and we feel too that never again can we remark the sequence of day and night without thought of old Hugh Glass, and how such pageantry affected him the agonizing while he crawled those hundred miles.

When this background is understood the other pictures can be painted—those more human in their relationships, yet quite unappreciable without consciousness of this over-brooding power of nature, which even in its might need not be thought of as something belittling man, but as something rendering him akin to whatever gods there be. Reading Neihardt, one can the better understand Hamlin Garland's dealing with those later bitter epochs of gloom on which he concentrates. And Neihardt is an antidote to this gloom also, as the following picture evidences, in spirit and in most details a picture not untrue of the majority of western farms to-day, though written of an earlier time:

“It was the hour when cattle straggle home.

Across the clearing in a hush of sleep

They saunter, lowing; loiter belly-deep

Amid the lush grass by the meadow stream.

How like the sound of water in a dream

The intermittent tinkle of yon bell.

A windlass creaks contentment from a well,

And cool deeps gurgle as the bucket sinks.

Now blowing at the trough the plow-team drinks;

The shaken harness rattles. Sleepy quails
Call far. The warm milk hisses in the pails
There in the dusky barn-lot. Crickets cry.
The meadow twinkles with the glowing fly.
One hears the horses munching at their oats.
The green grows black. A veil of slumber floats
Across the haunts of home-enamoured men."

There is magic in such realism as this, and such things as this need singing, all of them, the farm and the home and the deeds of other days and men in whom

"the mood
Of daring and of fortitude"

was more than a mood,—was the vital temper of their being. This temper has to be conserved for the welding of the nation, and it is right to have songs sung of the fiery deeds that went before the winning of our present position,—the position which leaves us free to assert our real will to live, which is the will to see visions without which we must perish. And Neihardt is helping us to see those former far-off days which are still our heritage, and without a poet's seeing of which we are without that understanding which can make us as a people conscious of our power and eager for our destiny.

The Midland Library

The announcement of another book on the moving picture instantly suggests one more compendium of directions for the scenario writer. Not so in the case of Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture*. (The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.25.) Here is something refreshingly new: a diagnosis of the moving picture as a work of art, an application of the canons of art to the making of films, with the practical artist-prophet's vision of what the cinematograph can do for the architectural and social future of America.

Mr. Lindsay classifies all pictures into those of action (sculpture-in-motion), intimacy (painting-in-motion), and splendor (architecture-in-motion). On the basis of these analogies he opens up new possibilities for making really artistic films, and furnishes the theatergoer with a working criterion for enjoyment and criticism. Noble works of sculpture, painting, and architecture may provide the groundwork for scenarios of present-day life. The frieze of the Parthenon is to "be studied by the author-producer though it be but an idyl in disguise that his scenario calls for: merry young farmers hurrying to the State Fair parade, boys making all speed to the political rally." "Hearthstone tales" in the mood of one of De Forest Brush's family groups, declares Mr. Lindsay, "would be unmistakable in their distinction."

A bit unique and surprising is a chapter on "Hieroglyphics" in which the author points out the likenesses of the photoplay to the Egyptian picture-writing. From this

comparison he derives a prophecy. The growth in richness and significance of "our new picture-alphabets" will be a sort of language evolution which brings with it stylists, so that some day we will "distinguish the different photoplay masters as we now delight in the separate tang of O. Henry and Mark Twain and Howells."

But it is in the closing chapters of the book that we are confronted with Mr. Lindsay's pulse-quickenings visions. We may extend the mood of California, build up a perpetual World's Fair in America through the architectural propaganda of the moving picture. More than that, we may behold the destiny, the civilization of the "America of Tomorrow" through the magic of the "prophet-wizards" of the camera. The writer and producer have it in their power to mold the social, religious, and political future of the country. These are brave prophecies, vast outlooks, but not unfeasible if we admit the preponderating influence of the motion picture as compared with the book or newspaper.

The groundwork of Mr. Lindsay's discussion, the central thesis seems to be this: The photoplay is essentially a pictorial, not a dramatic art; hence, to use his own introductory words, "whatever the seeming emphasis on dramatic excitement, the tendency of the best motion pictures is to evolve quite a different thing; the mood of the standard art gallery, the spirit of Tintoretto rather than that of Moliere." Then, the future processes of development will have as their ideal the perfection of pictorial beauty, the production of classics of sculpture-in-motion, painting-in-motion, and architecture-in-motion.

While one may feel that some of Mr. Lindsay's analogies are strained, that undue emphasis is placed on the pictorial consideration, yet there is no escaping the charm, the vivid-

ness, the enthusiasm of the book. These are convincing where the bare outlines of his theories would sound strangely fantastic.

Some manual of this sort was inevitable. The mushroom industrial development of the moving picture, its tremendous and abiding influence on the American people, called for a guiding, clarifying discussion of the status of this new art. The producers with keen eyes for the dramatic have given us more excitement than beauty. But those who have striven to do something in "the spirit of Tintoretto" will welcome this attempt of one artist to bring order out of an aesthetic chaos. Mr. Lindsay has built a foundation for photoplay aesthetics. Whether it shall be permanent is a question to be settled not by the reviewer but by the author, the producer, and the picture-playgoing public.

But the most skeptical cannot deny the present value of *The Art of the Moving Picture* as a working criterion for the judgment of current films. One is prepared for keener enjoyment of pictures of real merit; there is bred a discontent with the rubbish. If this discontent can be multiplied by the number of readers which the book deserves, and made to react constructively on the wizards of the studio, we shall not care much whether Mr. Lindsay's theories are orthodox or heretical, sound or fantastic.

To introduce the American spirit to his Teutonic friend, the Herr Director, and to impress him favorably with it is the task that Dr. Edward A. Steiner undertook last spring. Of his attempt and the measure of its success, Dr. Steiner tells in his thoroughly enjoyable book, *Introducing the American Spirit* (Fleming H. Revell Co., \$1.00 net). The book is written in a characteristic style, with that mingling

of humor and serious purpose that those who know Dr. Steiner will recognize so well.

The Herr Director takes the Old World attitude toward America and Americans, and remains unshaken in his convictions throughout his trip from coast to coast. He will admit of a modification of his view of America, but not an alteration. To him it is still the big, crude, uncultured country that he considered it in the first place. He has been made to feel, however, as the reader must inevitably feel also, the deep faith which Dr. Steiner has in America and its ultimate purpose. "The first and only doctrine of our national creed which we have as yet formulated," Steiner asserts, "is that we have a great national destiny."

Although the book as a whole is full of humor, in the last chapter Dr. Steiner turns in all seriousness to a discussion of the challenge of the American spirit. National feeling over the great war, preparedness, race prejudices fostered in various ways,—in all these he sees a challenge to the American Spirit. He realizes the dangerous influences that may easily break down and destroy this Spirit, but his last words echo the keynote of the whole book: faith in America.

